Social Questions
BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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Democratic Rights and National Defense

Although we are not actually at war, our national life is increasingly taking on the aspects of a war economy. The demand for ever greater efficiency in production threatens our industrial democracy, and the plea of "national emergency" enlarges the prospect of anti-democratic action against freedom of speech, press, religion, education and political action.

LABOR'S RIGHTS

In New York State the Rapp-Coudert Committee, investigating "subversive" activities in New York schools, seeks to force union officials of the American Federation of Teachers to turn over membership lists. Prof. Counts, president of the A. F. T. says, "If the membership lists of the teachers' union can be opened, the time may be not far distant when the membership lists of other unions will be similarly opened. It is the beginning of a road which may lead to government control of trade unions and the end of the free labor movement in America." This opening of lists would make possible intimidation, discrimination and black-listing.

Darwin J. Meserole and Arthur Garfield Hays, outstanding New York City attorneys, have volunteered their services in defending the constitutional rights of WPA workers discharged because they refused to sign a statement declaring they were not "an alien, a Communist, or a member of a Nazi bund organization." This regulation, applying to the economically weakest group of workers, is not only oppressive but a denial of a citizen's right to think as he chooses on political and social matters. A dangerous trend is further revealed when the Attorney General of the United States, according to Mr. Meserole, attempts to "have these cases dismissed on a technicality, thus preventing a trial on their merits, when at the same time he is giving assurance to business men . . . that the Sherman Act will not be enforced on government contracts for armaments."

In some states the charge has been made that draft boards have been packed by anti-labor members. Vigorous protest has brought about some changes already. In August, Sidney Hillman, labor representative of the Defense Commission, announced that provisions of the Walsh-Healey Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act would be adhered to in granting defense contracts. Attorney General Jackson supported him with a legal opinion. Both were later forced to change their position, and the War and Navy Departments said that they had never taken the guarantees seriously as the guarantees were only one factor in a dozen to be considered in granting contracts. So our fundamental national law protecting labor's civil rights is being broken by connivance of the government itself. Labor has been humiliated and big business has been appeased.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Under the pretense of attacking subversive and unpatriotic groups, sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses have been bitterly assailed through "legal" and illegal means in many parts of the country for refusal to salute the flag and for "disturbing the peace" by distributing literature.

Clergymen and theological students have been brought to trial and some have already been sentenced to prison terms for putting loyalty to God as interpreted by their consciences before a law which to them had no meaning apart from the war system they judged to be unchristian.

A member of the Military Affairs Committee, when questioned about the deferred status for clergymen, said he thought ministers could serve a larger purpose in the national defense in their pulpits than in the armed forces of the country. Are the ministers of America expected to give religious sanction to war and make of their pulpits recruiting stations?

A Catholic Youth Conference in Chicago passed the following resolution inviting restrictions on civil rights: "Whereas: in the event of national emergency, it becomes necessary for the common good of all to restrict certain civil rights, we shall cooperate with the decree of our government in imposing reasonable and just restrictions."

FREE SPEECH

During the last few months letters addressed to the President criticizing his attitude and statements on the war issue have been turned over to the Department of Justice. Photostatic copies of the letters reveal that they have been handled by the Criminal Division. Is the effort to make a forthright and honorable criticism to be considered a criminal offense, or is this a technique of intimidation intended to check free expression of opinion through fear of being placed on the F.B.I. suspect list?

In Washington, D. C., two days after the election two young men were arrested and held incommunicado for passing out leaflets announcing a peace meeting on Armistice Day.

The Dies Committee has again used "extra-legal and unconstitutional" methods to attack persons seeking to

Pacific School of Religion

maintain peace. Oklahoma ministers were called before a Dies sub-committee for examination of their peace interests. No member of the House of Representatives was present. Is the Dies Committee with its ruthless use of newspaper publicity seeking to discredit those who would hold public officials to their solemn pledges?

While this intimidation and meddling with the rights of free speech has been going on, a Cincinnati Court has declared that the N.L.R.B. has interfered with the free speech of Henry Ford by ordering that the company police who severely beat up men distributing union leaflets, should stop forcing into the hands of workers, as they left the plant, Ford's opinions on unions. In another somewhat similar case the Supreme Court has upheld the N.L.R.B.

The phrase in the Selective Service Act concerning those who counsel, aid or abet in evading any of the responsibilties under the Act may be construed to place heavy penalties upon those who express opinions as to the nature of the Act. This could easily apply to clergymen giving spiritual advice to parishioners.

Radio stations share the trend. It is becoming increasingly difficult even to buy time for programs by peace groups. Investigation of refusals brings forth the comment "Controversial." One station kept the submitted script, sent it to Washington, and reported that the writers might regret some of the things they had put down in writing.

FREE PRESS

Our theoretically free press is increasingly controlled in the interests of certain ideas and purposes. It is almost impossible to get news of peace action in the press. It is almost impossible to get sympathetic or even unbiased labor news in most papers. The National Federation for Constitutional Liberties has listed some of the more glaring acts of news suppression. "Only one large paper in the country printed anything about the petition to discontinue the Dies Committee which was signed by 100 outstanding Americans, including six college presidents; only two or three papers printed the "Defense of the Bill of Rights" issued by 62 prominent Americans; scores of protests against the Dies Committee and against conscription by CIO and AFL unions were unmentioned in the press. About 2 percent of the press mentioned the state and city conferences against anti-alien bills in which delegates representing millions of Americans participated; most papers suppressed altogether the American Bar Association Bill of Rights Committee's warning to the nation against certain Congressional actions; more than 300 leading American writers issued a declaration against American entry into the war—it was ignored." And when 6,000 Americans trekked to Chicago to organize for peace and went on to Washington to demonstrate for peace, they were either ignored or misrepresented. While we may seek comfort from the election in saying that people do not pay attention to the press, still we must not overlook the fact that it is the only source of information on most subjects available to the general public. They may be independent of the press once in four years, but in the interim the insidious pressure continues. While news concerning peace and democratic rights is suppressed and distorted, the Dies Committee, any situation that might invite hysteria, and any train leaving for the army camp are front page news.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The tension of increased militarization of our national outlook effects freedom to teach and interpret. Direct and indirect pressure is used. In Oklahoma a professor in a state college wrote to his congressman opposing war and the conscription bill. He was fired. In Pittsburgh a high school teacher who had been prominent in a community forum was suspended for organizing a group to study the draft bill. At the University of Michigan 13 students were dismissed without explanation. When a teaching fellow asked that they have the fundamental right of hearing the charge against themselves, he also was dismissed. President Butler of Columbia, long a friend of Mussolini, called the faculty into extraordinary session to urge that they share his anti-fascist and anti-nazi feelings, and most persons present probably did not recall that the last student expelled from Columbia was disciplined for making public protest against sending an official delegate to the academic ceremonies at the anniversary of the University of Heidelberg (Germany). Vigorous faculty action forced a modification of President Butler's statement. Earl Browder, Communist candidate, was denied the right to speak at Columbia. And Jerome Davis quotes the President of one of our largest state universities as saying "There is no such thing as academic freedom for students."

CONSCRIPTION AND CIVIL RIGHTS

The American Peace Mobilization has announced an eight point program to extend social, racial, political and economic democracy in spite of conscription: 1. Guarding against discriminatory conscription aimed at labor, peace and progressive organizations. 2. Fighting increases in prices and rents and general war-time profiteering. 3. Protecting rights of conscripts to vote, and to campaign on political issues. 4. Fighting Jim Crow-ism in conscripted and regular army forces; protesting segregation of Negroes in separate regiments, and discriminatory assignments to menial tasks. 5. Seeing that conscripts have adequate housing, health protection and furlough rights (one week every three months). 6. Preventing evictions and foreclosures on installment buying. 7. Working to guarantee unconditional reemployment of conscripts, not dependent as now on "prevailing conditions." 8. Campaigning for increase in conscript pay to $40 a month, continuation of social security rights and adequate compensation for disability, injury and death.

A conscientious objector who refused to register was prevented from obtaining a marriage license "because the prospective bridegroom was notoriously and publicly engaged in breaking the law."

The conscientious objector who registers according to law must give information concerning his beliefs that can conceivably be used as a check-list for harassing as fifth columnists those who make use of the provision of the law.

The argument is raised that a conscript army is a democratically chosen army. But if provision is made to defer service for men in key industries, in agriculture, in school and in useful community functions, the result is that the make-up of the army will be largely of those unemployed and under-privileged. There is little that is democratic about the compulsion of an empty stomach. Nor is the usual officer-private relationship intended to develop democratic processes of action. If a measure of

democracy can be maintained in a conscripted army it is in spite of the organization rather than because of it. Perhaps all eligible men had an equal chance of having their numbers called, but not all have an equal chance of facing military service.

MINORITY PARTIES

The recent political campaign has brought into the open an avalanche of repressive action against the smaller political parties, tending to make it impossible for many Americans to express true freedom of choice as to their political leadership.

Various techniques have been used to "get" minority parties. In some states the requirements for getting on the ballot were placed so high that only the two major parties had any chance of being approved. Where this method failed, intimidation in the form of vigilante or mob action was resorted to. If enough signatures were produced to make the party legal, the lists were published in newspapers with great prominence, inferring that the signers were members of the party whose petition they had signed. In instances this caused loss of jobs, or led the signers under pressure to claim that the petition had been misrepresented to them, thus making it possible to prosecute the canvasser as a violator of election law.

As in the past, millions of Americans were disenfranchised through the poll tax.

Guy Emery Shipler, Editor of *The Churchman,* with hundreds of other clergymen has called attention to this threat to the free election system in America by revealing specific violations in 23 states. President Roosevelt said, in his Philadelphia speech, "In the maintenance of free elections rests the complete and enduring safety of our form of government." That freedom is already endangered in nearly half of our states. This challenge to freedom tends to come from certain so-called patriotic groups who fight democracy as they fight the "communists." The effect, however, reaches to Roger Babson and the Democrats-for-Willkie Clubs. Such widespread violation of constitutional rights cannot help but undermine the security of our democratic processes in more than the elections themselves.

Widespread efforts to condemn minority party leaders on flimsy evidence and technicalities of the law do not pay high tribute to our faith in the people's judgment to choose their own leadership.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of attacks on civil rights is but a sample of what is happening with increasing tempo as the war crisis develops.

The volume and intensity of the attack upon democratic rights grows with the nearness of our approach to war. The most serious and revealing aspect of the situation is the extent to which the Administration joins with its reactionary opponents in undermining our democratic base. A recent example was the statement of Attorney General Jackson that the F.B.I. had informed him that the strike at Vultee Air Craft Works was caused by Communists. It now appears that the liaison officer between the Los Angeles police and the F.B.I. was the notorious Lieutenant F. B. Hynes, whose red squad had to be abolished after his record of collaboration with anti-labor employers was exposed by the LaFollette Committee. Besides relying upon information worth nothing, trying to substitute an appeal to prejudice for justice and covering up the real issue, which was whether 50c an hour was a proper wage, the Attorney General put deadly ammunition in the hands of reactionaries. It was promptly used in support of an anti-strike bill which classes strikes in defense industries as treason and permits the penalty of life imprisonment.

In this matter, as in the whole story of the Dies Committee and its anti-democratic methods and proposals, our internal dealings with the enemies of democracy follow the foreign policy of the democracies: First the enemies of democracy are supplied with the sinews of war, then they are appeased, and finally after the advantage is in their hands they are fought, with disastrous consequences.

When our democratic rights are being progressively destroyed from within we are told more and more of how we must fight and sacrifice to protect democracy from the threat from without. But what is democracy? Is it bound up so closely with the financial interests of an investing class that millions of men must follow blindly and without protest the road to breakdown? Is our civil liberty a luxury to be sluffed off when the economic interests of a few are endangered? How much faith have we in a fight for democracy somewhere else when we are punished for struggling for it here? Or is our democracy so real to us, and so essential to the preservation of a way of life we call Christian, that we will protect it from its foes within as well as without? Is democracy bound up with the rights of men to think and act and know, or is it a feeble faith of men afraid to be men except when the occasion is auspicious?

These questions face us along with many others. The fight for democracy has begun—has been going on—in every city, village and hamlet where human rights are trampled on by those who value things more than men. Civil liberty is priceless, dictators are cheap. We must refuse to surrender, even in an "emergency," those distinctive qualities of American living that have been so nobly sought and so laboriously attained. To defend itself democracy must expand. We, the people, are the instruments of this expansion. Not by curtailing civil liberties, but by extending them to more people in more situations, do we follow the American pattern for building life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Let not false prophets use this dark hour of history to destroy the method that alone points the way toward a better day.

—Rev. Edgar Jackson.

Urgent

In response to our statement of the financial situation and the proposed program in the October Bulletin, we have received about 150 replies, and extra contributions amounting to about $150. This is fine, but $1,500 is the amount that has to be found if the work of Charles Webber is to continue. $250 more has come from an outside source. Are you one of those who has not replied? Unless the balance is in sight by the first week in January, when your Committee has to make the decision, it will have no choice but to order the discontinuance of Webber's work in May. I present you with the unadorned fact. The consequences you know. Is there anything you can do to prevent them?

Harry F. Ward.

News from the Field

The members of the M. F. S. S. who attended the Federation Conference held in conjunction with the U. C. C. D. Conference at Riverside Church, New York City, on December 6th and 7th, instructed Charles C. Webber to request all Federation units and members to work for the adoption, by their Annual Conferences, of resolutions calling upon: (1) the Methodist Book Concern publishing house at Nashville, Tennessee, to sign a collective agreement with the Allied Printing Trades of that city; and (2) the Board of Temperance to require the Dining Room, Inc., now leasing space for a restaurant in the Methodist Building at Washington, D. C., to stop discriminating against Negro patronage.

U. C. C. D.

The following excerpts are from the findings adopted by the United Christian Council for Democracy at its New York City Conference, on December 6 and 7, at which Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Dr. Harry F. Ward and Charles C. Webber of the M. F. S. S. were among the speakers:

Civil Liberties

"We hold that in these days of intense and proper concern for the protection of America the Bill of Rights takes on a particular importance. The Bill of Rights is the American way.

"We deplore that already political opinion has been made a test of eligibility for the right to work on WPA; that free elections have been interfered with through illegal intimidation by vigilante groups cooperating with a Congressional Committee set up to investigate un-American acts.

"We must oppose the continuation of the Dies Committee which has proven itself unfit for the task assigned to it.

"We call for federal protection of equal opportunities for the Negro people and oppose with special emphasis the denial of this equality by the military and naval establishments. We stand for the passage of the Anti-Lynching bill as a step towards protection of the Negro people against mob violence. Jim Crow-ism we declare to be a national disgrace and unAmerican to the core.

"We hold it our duty to protect the rights of conscientious objectors under the law. We protest the imposition of the severe and unequal sentences and the discrimination against political objectors as opposed to religious objectors. We recommend the collaboration with labor to protect against packing of local draft boards with anti-labor appointees.

Labor

"Labor's rights are particularly menaced in the present situation as is shown by the number of repressive bills now before Congress.

"We insist that any limitations on the right to strike must be justified by guarantees to labor of satisfactory hours and wages and participation in any controls. We protest government connivance in law breaking in the granting of defense contracts to violators of the law, particularly to those adjudged guilty of infractions of the provisions of the N.L.R.A.

"Specifically in the field of legislation we must secure the passage of the Neely-Keller Federal Mine Inspection Bill, the LaFollette-Thomas Oppressive Labor Practices Bill. We will endeavor to prevent the enactment of the Logan-Walter Bill, the Smith Amendments to the N.L.R.A. and the Smith Anti-Sabotage Bill.

"In the defense of the living standards of our people we will continually oppose profiteering and price rises.

"We shall give every publicity to corporation profits during this period and protest the excessive earnings.

"We endorse consumers' cooperatives and consumers' education.

Health and Housing

"It is our conviction that the resources of America are ample to provide for adequate health services and decent housing for all the people, in addition to an adequate defense program. It is essential that our people have a deep sense of what we have to defend—a country devoted to the health, housing and social welfare of its citizens.

"We agree with the five point program adopted by the National Health Conference meeting in Washington, D. C., July 1938, which included: 1. Expansion of our public health, maternal, and child health services, with a special emphasis on preventing sickness. 2. Provision for medical care at public expense for the one-third of the population in the lower income levels unable to pay for adequate private care. 3. Protection against the loss of wages during sickness, by insurance.

"The Federal government should continue and expand its program of promoting slum clearance and new housing for low income groups through further authorization of Federal loans and appropriations for Federal grants to local housing authorities. (Specifically this recommendation can be carried out by the passage in the House of Representatives of Senator Wagner's Housing Bill, S-591, calling for an appropriation of $800,000,000 in order to continue the work of the U. S. Housing Authority.)

"Adequate housing should be provided in army camps and in the adjacent community where there is a population increase."

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